

Free my Heart to Hope: Forensic Peer Specialists a Vital Recovery Workforce



Annie Jollymore,
Systemic Advocate:
People Advocating for Change
through Empowerment Inc

"Human Services and Justice:
Accomplishments, Changes and
Opportunities"
November 22, 2011

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PACE November 22/11

About PACE:

- PACE is a Consumer Survivor Initiative (CSI) governed by/for people with mental health issues. It seeks to ensure advancement in: social/criminal justice, human rights, economic development, systemic change/education and to enhance awareness- from the public to policy makers-of the stigma and inequalities faced by consumer/ survivors of mental health services .

PACE believes

in:

- The right to personal autonomy, self-determination, respect and dignity of the person, the right to informed choice, and to be free from discrimination
- We believe that people are empowered by providing leadership in all areas that affect their lives

What we do at PACE



- Advocacy to address quality of life, treatment & care issues and policy/legislation affecting consumers' rights
- Education to raise awareness of stigma, discrimination, rights, wellness & recovery
- Peer Support & Membership Development provides opportunities for socialization/reduced isolation & sharing of lived experience knowledge

Why we do it: Respect and Hope

- We honour people's gifts and strengths; aim for mutual learning and equal relationships. Equality enables people to trust, talk freely and test out ideas about recovery and their "self in community" and nurtures hope and self-respect.

Consumer-Survivor Initiatives...

- ...Are evidence-based practices which, partnered with traditional mental health services, ease overburdened clinical programs; provide life in the community and improve outcomes for consumers by addressing needs not in the purview of clinicians.

How we view mental illness:



Genetic Predisposition + Loss /Stress /Trauma

**Insufficient Knowledge/Supports/Coping Skills &
Resources**

Criminal Justice

- Like most mental health organizations, PACE has many members who have been through the criminal justice system.

Mental Disorder + Social Conditions

Many of their 'crimes' relate to:

- lack of coping skills
- homelessness & poverty
- coupled with mental illness/ addiction issues

Their offences are primarily misdemeanors:

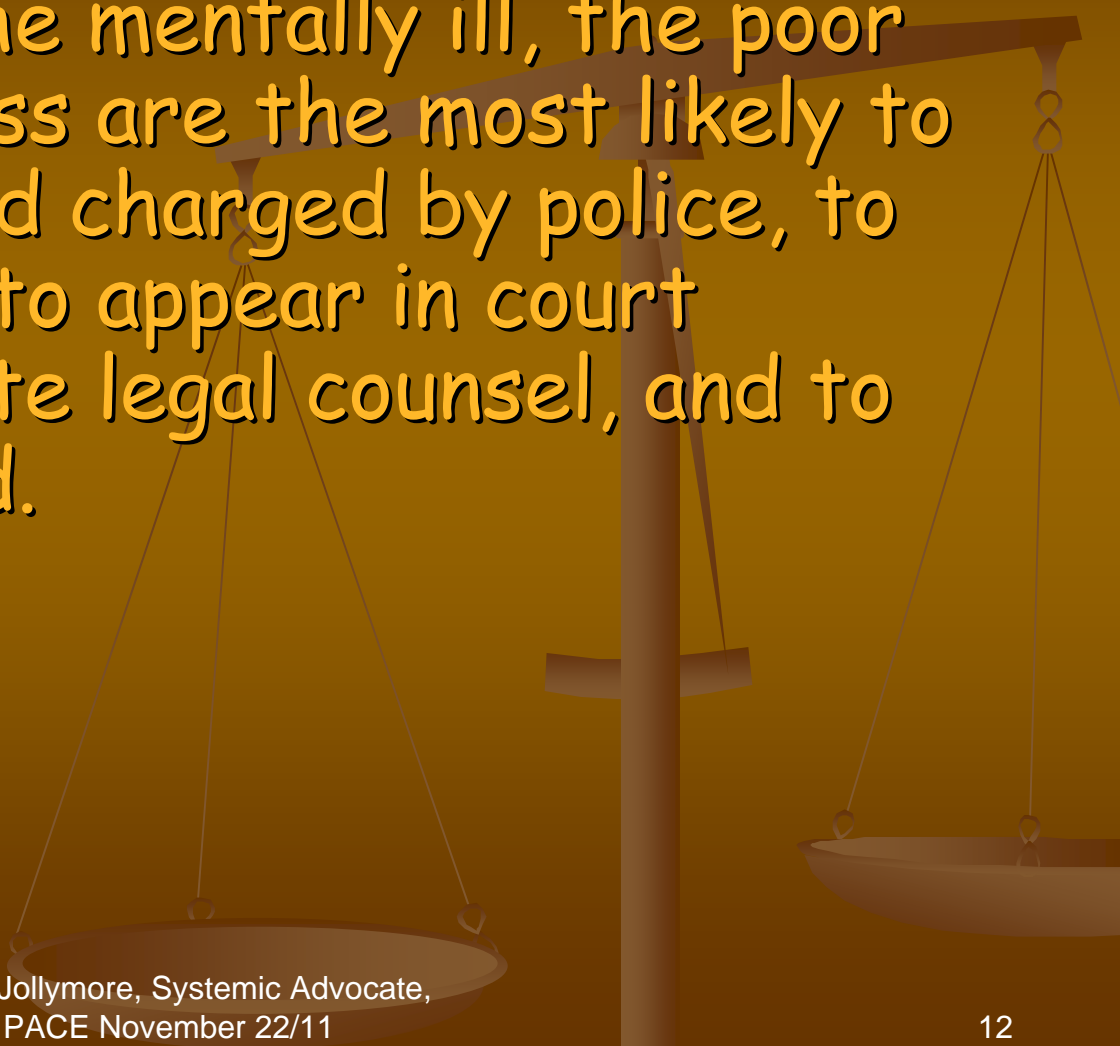
- Petty theft, prostitution, public intoxication, simple assault, disorderly conduct, trespass, vandalism, drug possession, and/or apprehensions under the Mental Health Act

Few Options



- Police have few options for dealing with 'Emotionally Disturbed Persons'. In Thunder Bay, they can arrest them, take them to hospital or let them go.

--Diverting the Crisis Call, 2006

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- Canada-wide, the mentally ill, the poor and the homeless are the most likely to be picked up and charged by police, to be denied bail, to appear in court without adequate legal counsel, and to be incarcerated.

--Diverting the Crisis Call

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- The situation is grim for cops, courts, corrections & consumers.

Jail conditions negatively affecting mental health:

1. Overcrowding/lack of privacy
2. Violence
3. Boredom
4. Isolation from family/friends
5. Uncertainty about life after release
6. Inadequate mental health services

Overcrowding/Lack of Privacy

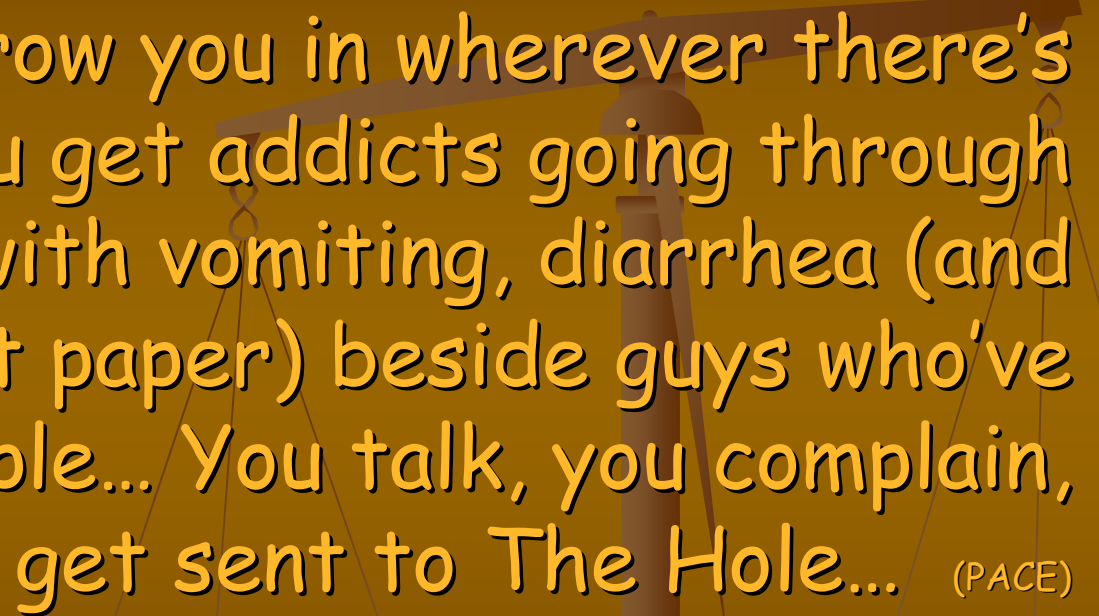
- Many inmates awaiting trial sleep on the floor of overcrowded, smelly cells within inches of an open toilet. Everything they do, including using the toilet, is open to the view of the guards and other inmates.

--Ted Matlow, Superior Court Judge, Ontario

Mentally ill swamping prisons:

- “You have... medical and surgical emergencies, heart attacks, and goodness knows what, all muddled up ... Police arriving with a seriously mentally ill person are not a priority.”

(Kirk Makin, Mentally ill offenders swamping prisons, *Globe and Mail*, Nov 2010.)

- 
- 'They just throw you in wherever there's space... You get addicts going through withdrawal, with vomiting, diarrhea (and no toilet paper) beside guys who've murdered people... You talk, you complain, you get sent to The Hole... (PACE)

Violence



- You can count on someone getting in your face ... it's always best to fight - as hard as you can. Do whatever it takes to protect yourself.

(www.criminalswanted.org)

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Boredom



You get depressed, lonely, suicidal. There's lots of guys inside with Bipolar. They can't handle the frustration. Guys'll do anything to get out for half an hour. 2 days, 2 hours in here would drive anybody nuts (PACE)

Isolation from family/friends

Women with mental health issues, especially those who self-harm, have great difficulty adjusting to prison and are more likely to be kept in the most isolated and segregated living conditions.

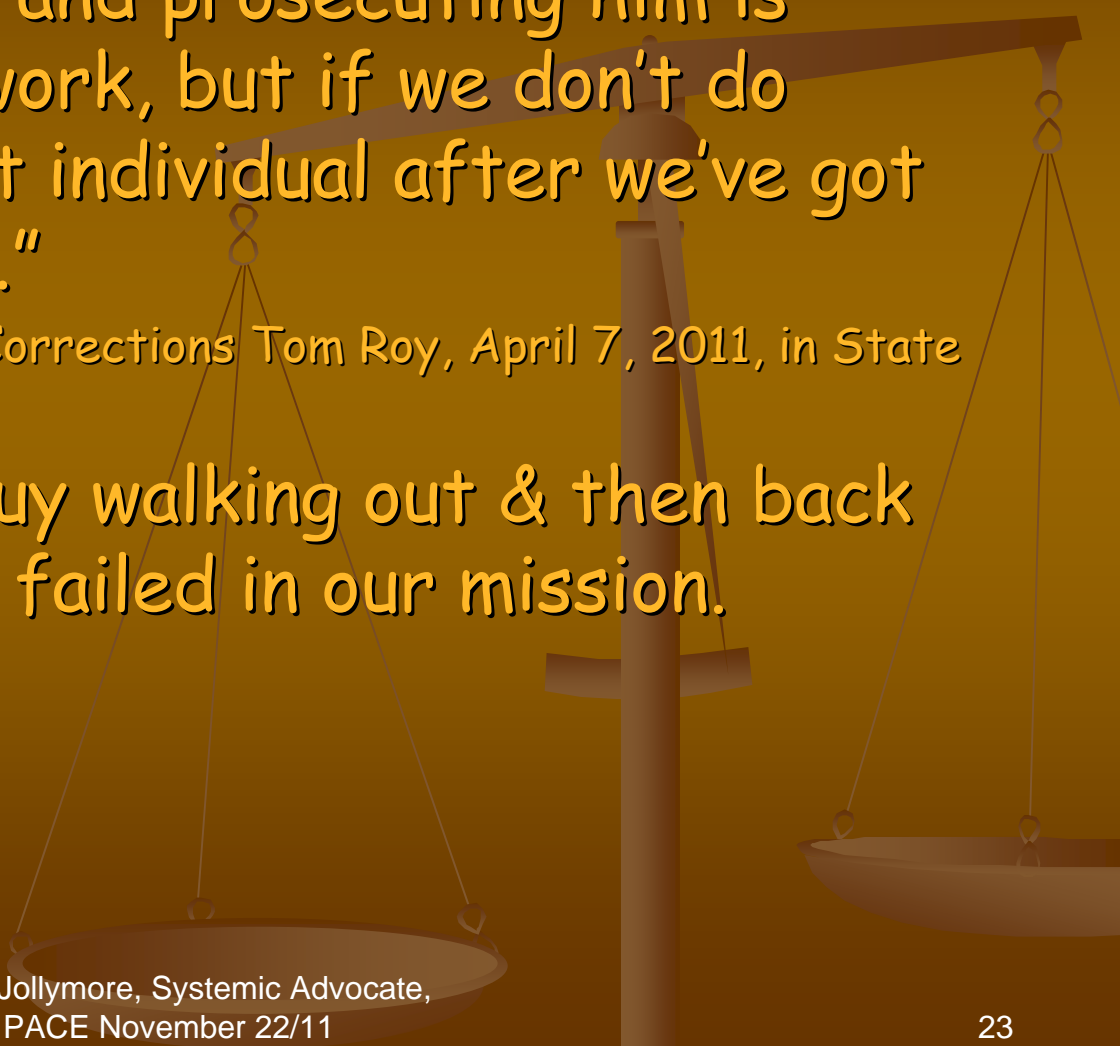
Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa

Isolation...

- You might get 2 half hour visits a week from family. You're separated from them by Plexiglas, and talk to them on a phone. You have to hold down a button on the phone to hear or talk. It hurts your finger after just a minute. (PACE)

Discharge Planning

- At the District Jail, they just say 'good luck' and let you go. Sometimes you don't even get your cash, jewelry, watch or...the shoes you arrived with back. Maybe they "forgot" to write those things down when processing you. But why keep my shoes? (PACE)

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- "Catching the guy and prosecuting him is really important work, but if we don't do anything with that individual after we've got him... shame on us."

--Minnesota Commissioner of Corrections Tom Roy, April 7, 2011, in State of Recidivism

If it's the same guy walking out & then back in the door, we've failed in our mission.

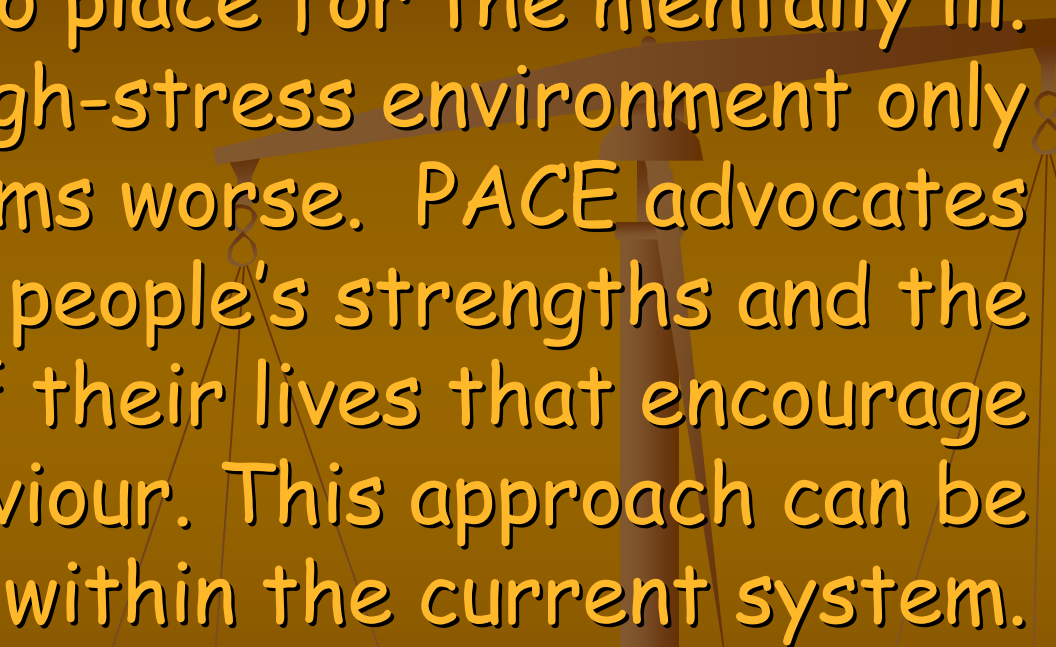
Health/Mental Health Services

- According to the law, Ontario Correctional facilities must “provide every inmate with essential ... services” and “reasonable access” to services that aren't essential, but “will contribute to the inmate's rehabilitation and successful reintegration into the community”.

Correctional Service Canada Quick Facts

■ However:

You have to make staff believe you need medical attention. This one inmate had an infected cut and it was at least 4 days before he was taken to hospital... You don't want to show any emotion. Others will prey on your weaknesses. And I don't just mean the inmates. (PACE)

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- Prison is no place for the mentally ill. The harsh, high-stress environment only makes problems worse. PACE advocates building on people's strengths and the aspects of their lives that encourage lawful behaviour. This approach can be initiated within the current system.

How? By putting recovery into action:

"It isn't one person or incident or clinical intervention that is critical... Connecting with others helps: Receiving respect and warmth breaks through the isolation and helps you feel worthy and alive." (Ron Bassman, *Overcoming the Impossible: My Journey Through Schizophrenia* [Psychology Today Feb, 2001])

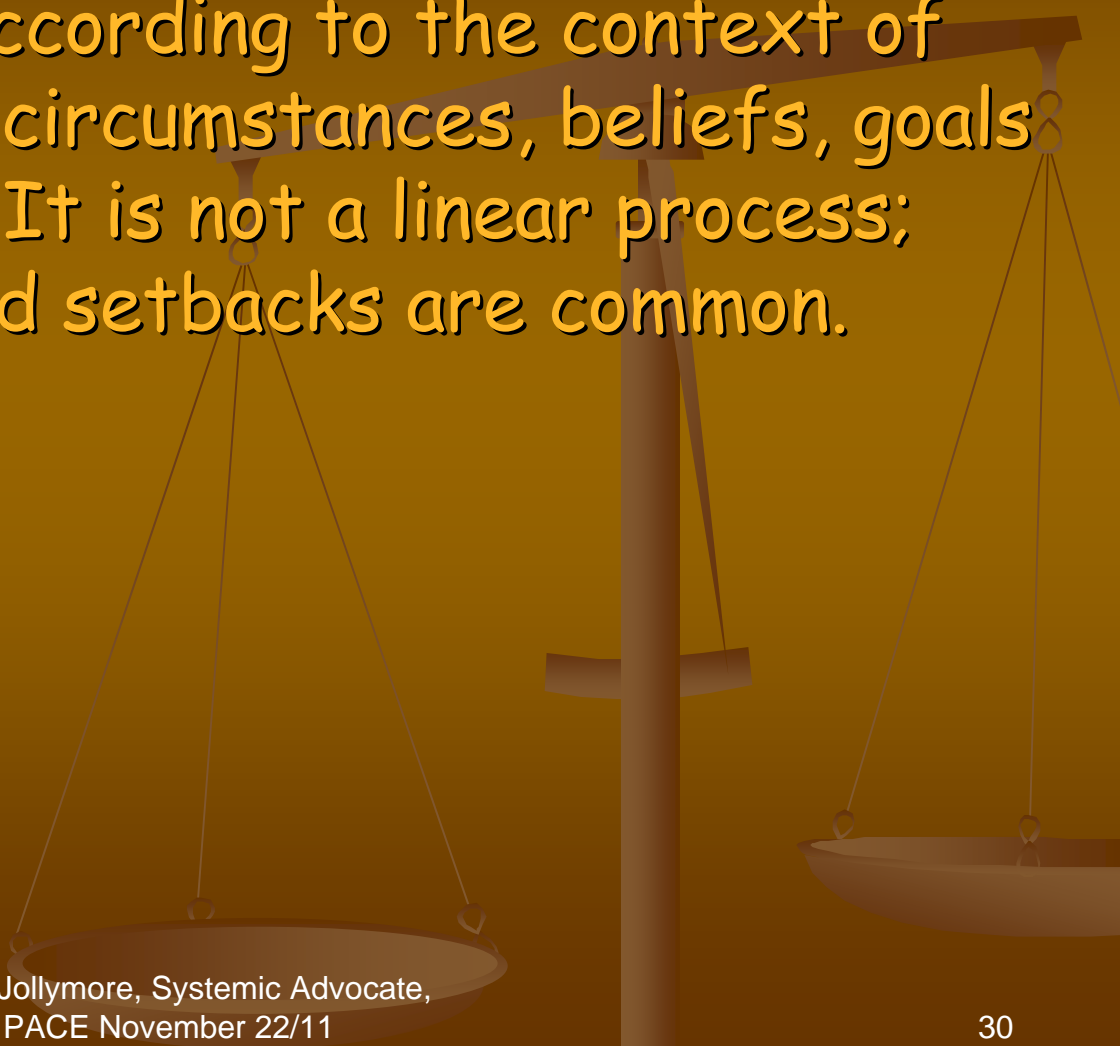
Invest in Recovery

- Invest in trained, certified peer support (CPS) services. Graduates of CPS programs complete full-time training emphasizing the principles of consumer/survivor empowerment, mental health recovery, the use of Wellness and Recovery Action Plans (WRAPs), plus in-service training & supervision.

Recovery

Recovery is essentially a process of regaining social and psychological functioning and living a meaningful, fulfilling life.

It doesn't mean living symptom free; but rather finding a way of coping with the limitations we have: living life to the fullest despite our mental health issues.



Each person will define wellness and recovery differently, according to the context of his/her history, circumstances, beliefs, goals and dreams. It is not a linear process; relapses and setbacks are common.

Recovery & Empowerment

- Empowerment--the process of gaining or regaining the control over one's life that is necessary for self-determination and dignity—is a key element of recovery, but people must have access to the *means* and *opportunity* to assume responsibility for their lives and their well-being.

Empowerment & feeling human...

- The “Therapeutic Intervention of Empowerment” gives consumers a place. They are the experts; they have the street smarts.
- Through empowerment, people begin to feel that they deserve something and that they are worthwhile human beings.

--Building Bridges: Consumers and Representatives of the Mental Health and Criminal Justice Systems in Dialogue

Recovery-focused change includes:

- Staff who are invested in the recovery model
 - Services that instill hope
 - Relationships that facilitate communication and trust
 - Mechanisms to inform participants of their rights
- Consumers to educate providers about jail and prison culture

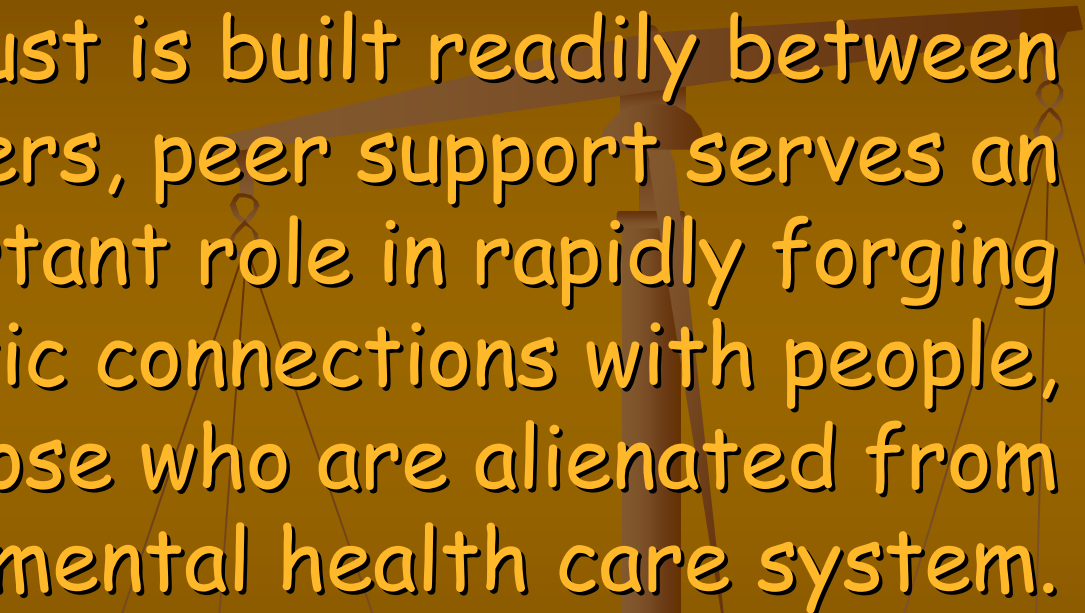
Peer Supported Recovery

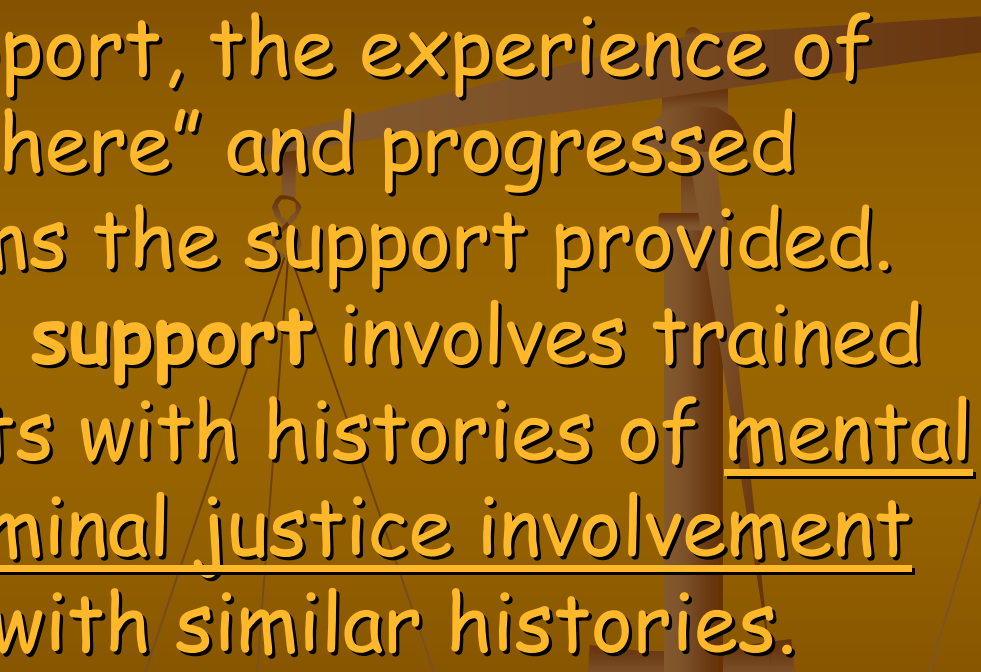


- Peer support is a system of giving and receiving help, founded on the key principles of respect, shared responsibility and a mutual agreement of what is helpful.
- Peer support sees the person first, understands their distress and offers solutions to issues or problems that have worked well for the supporting peer.

PACE's Definition

- A **Peer Supporter** is someone with lived experience of mental illness, who is living well and is able to support others experiencing mental illness work towards their own recovery.
- **Peer Support** is a helping relationship promoting warmth and dignity, which empowers individuals to make life-enhancing decisions and changes with the emotional and social support of a fellow consumer who has "been there".

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- Because trust is built readily between consumers, peer support serves an important role in rapidly forging therapeutic connections with people, especially those who are alienated from the mental health care system.

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- With peer support, the experience of having “been there” and progressed beyond, informs the support provided. Forensic peer support involves trained peer specialists with histories of mental illness and criminal justice involvement helping those with similar histories.

Differences between Forensic and Peer Specialist Training Programs

Forensic Peer Specialist	Peer Specialist
Previous experience of incarceration in jail or prison	Incidental and minimal involvement in CJ system
Special support around identifying and modifying adaptive jail behaviours and attitudes	Special support around identifying and modifying adaptive behaviours to medical model
Special support around trauma histories and confronting impact of incarceration	Special support around trauma
Specialized training on navigating the CJ system	Generalized training on navigating the CJ system
Intense exploration of transferable skills	Intense exploration of transferable skills
Prepared to work with consumers with significant histories of incarceration and substance abuse	Prepared to work with consumers with minimal criminal justice involvement and no current involvement with community supervision

Separate training programs for FPS allow us to...

- Address the unique needs of consumers with incarceration histories
- Counter the culture of incarceration in a safe and supportive environment
 - Help resolve past trauma and
 - Provide service coordination between providers, probation/parole and other types of community supervision

Instilling Hope

- The most important function of FPS is to instill hope and to be role models for the reality of recovery.

Core Disciplines of most Curricula:

- Self-help and Recovery
- Human Services Roles and Responsibilities
 - Work Readiness
- Navigating the Criminal Justice System
 - Professional Ethics

Training Objectives



- Assist trainees to come to terms with and recover from mental health/ criminal justice/trauma histories and grieve their losses in a safe and supportive environment
- Provide skills that prepare graduates for employment in entry- and mid-level human service jobs

Objectives...

- Acquire work readiness and job retention skills
- Identify and utilize transferable skills (e.g. street smarts)
- Resolve outstanding criminal justice and personal issues impacting on potential employment and job retention

Supervisors' Role

- Staff role is to assist trainees/ graduates to successfully meet all conditions and to serve as Boundary Spanners between criminal justice and employment programs.

Supporting Forensic Peer Specialists requires...

- Follow-along supports from supervisors, mental health and vocational specialists to maintain job and/or transition to another one
- Competitive jobs based on preferences for type and amount of work [FT or PT]
- Integrated work settings

Job Retention Strategies...

Supervisors

- Mediate conflicts at the request of the employer or graduate
 - Assist consumer in requesting reasonable accommodations

Program Challenges...

- Consumers are a heterogeneous group:
- Trainees need time to establish proficiency in specific skills. It helps to develop a supportive probationary period, and provide both workplace supports & accommodation.

Challenges...

- Continued systemic stigma /discrimination
 - Access to adequate range of social & educational activities that maintain FPS' wellness
- Staff preparedness for integration of consumers who may have been agency's clients

Challenges...



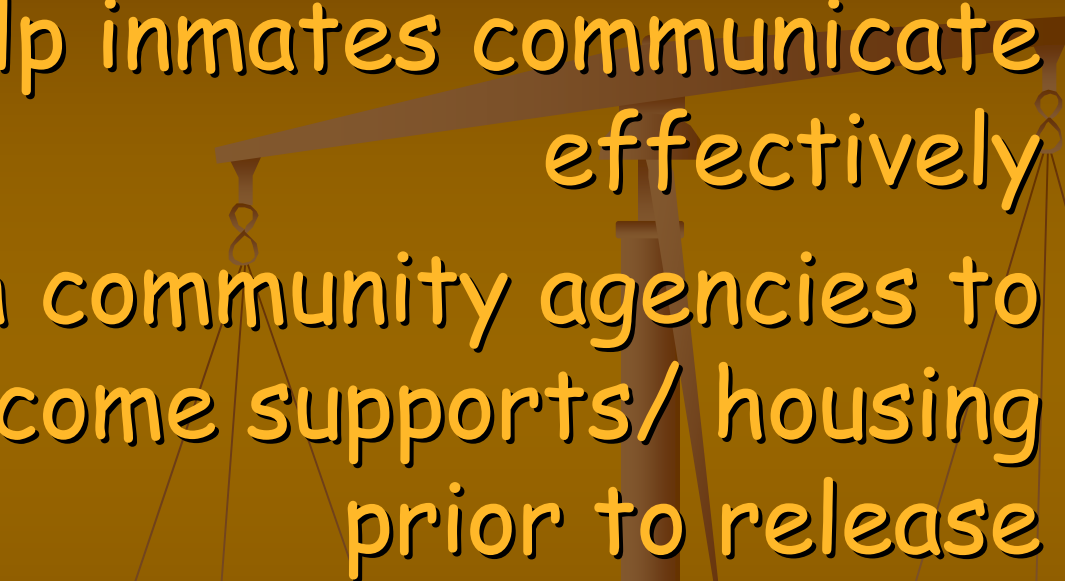
- Employment practices that bar the hiring of ex-offenders in direct service roles
- Insufficient trauma-informed services
- Unresolved credit history, family court/ custodial issues
- Breaking down Mental Health, Criminal Justice and Substance Abuse silos

Developing a Forensic Peer Specialist Training Program

- Identify key stakeholders in your community including consumers, families, victims rights organizations, mental health care providers, criminal justice programs and peer run services
- Convene focus groups to assess potential demand for the training and job opportunities for graduates
 - Identify and contact funders

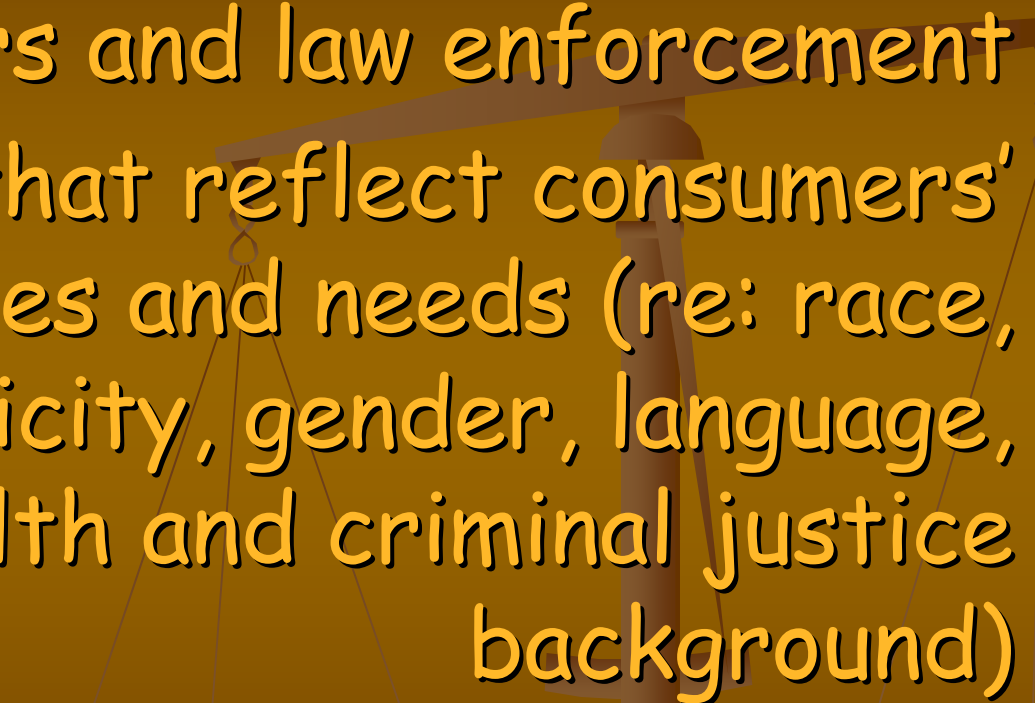
Examples of what Forensic Peer Supporters do:

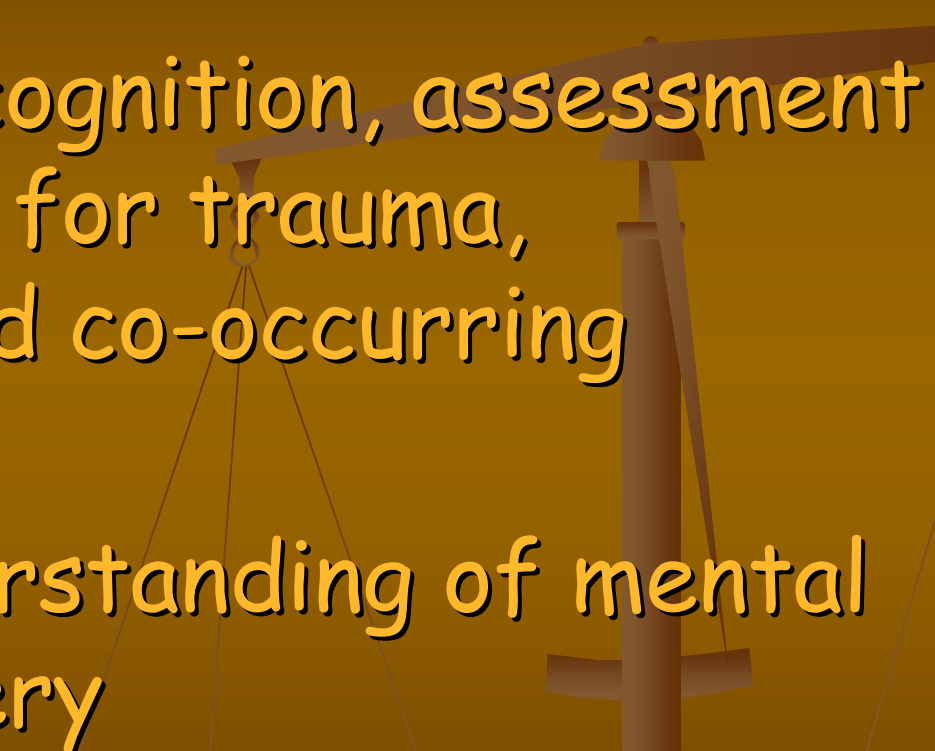
- Help new inmates adjust; witness documentation of personal effects, so “things don’t go missing”
- Mentoring; offer validation, empathy & active listening;
- Document and report any problems that arise

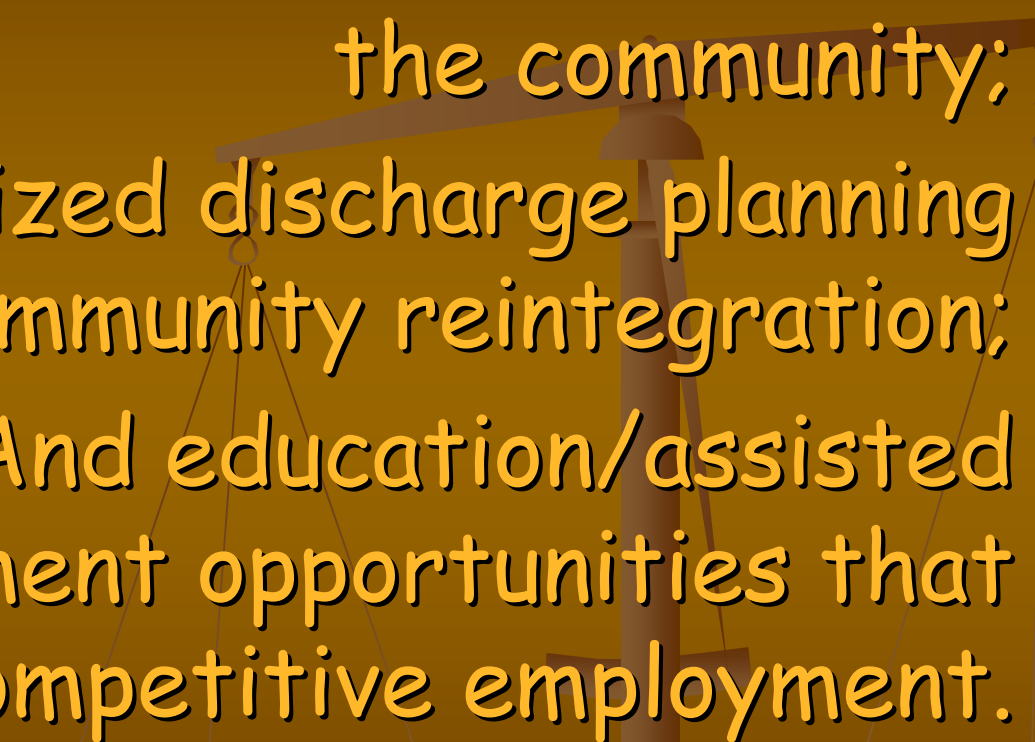
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- Help inmates communicate effectively
 - work with community agencies to arrange income supports/ housing prior to release

Outcomes & Benefits (for FPS AND Peers):

- Fostering hope for recovery through broad range of services
- Greater economic security, including decent, permanent, safe housing
- “A life in the community”: activities and interests including recreation, socialization & educational opportunities

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- Improved relationships between consumers and law enforcement
 - Services that reflect consumers' preferences and needs (re: race, ethnicity, gender, language, mental health and criminal justice background)

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- A focus on family as part of the recovery team
 - Improved recognition, assessment of & services for trauma, addictions and co-occurring disorders
 - Greater understanding of mental health recovery

- 
- Forgiveness & second chances in the community;
 - Individualized discharge planning prior to community reintegration;
 - And education/assisted employment opportunities that lead to competitive employment.

Scottish Proverb:

"Were it not for hope the heart would break."

Free our Hearts to
Hope

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Resources

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law: <http://www.bazelon.org/>

Building Bridges: Consumers and Representatives of the Mental Health and Criminal Justice Systems in Dialogue, <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA05-4067/SMA05-4067.pdf>

Toronto Globe and Mail

Jollymore, Annie, Diverting the Crisis Call: Report of the Crisis Call Community Development Project, Sky Works Charitable Foundation, 2006. [National Crime Prevention Strategy Community Mobilization Program]

State of Recidivism: The Revolving Door of America's Prisons, http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/sentencing_and_corrections/State_Recidivism_Revolving_Door_America_Prisons%20.pdf

Forensic Peer Support:

<http://www.recoveryxchange.org/HowieththeHarp.html>

<http://gainscenter.samhsa.gov/html/resources/>

<http://www.papeersupportcoalition.org/education/ceu.html>

http://www.alleghenycounty.us/uploadedFiles/DHS/Individual_and_Community_Health/Justice_Related_Services/Which_Way_Out_2007/WWO1107WedDillardEdmondsCourseDesc.pdf

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